

Timed Writing 2

Organization

Because you have a limited amount of time when you write a timed essay, it is important to organize your time so that you can create a complete response. It is common for students to feel a sense of panic when they see a clock counting down the seconds during an exam. Because of this psychological pressure, it is easy to overlook a few important things.

Outline Ideas

First of all, an outline will *always* benefit you. You may think that the best idea is to immediately start writing because the time is limited, but that could lead to a very disorganized presentation of an answer. Read the prompt carefully and make a brief outline of ideas so that you know all parts of the prompt will be addressed and all of your most important details will be included.

Your outline should include the important basics you will practice throughout this semester:

Timed Outlining

- Read the prompt carefully.
- Brainstorm your ideas for each part of the prompt.
- Organize your ideas into a logical outline.
- Decide on what is the most important to include.
- Write a thesis statement that directly answers the main part of the prompt.
- Write topic sentences for your main points.
- Write a restated thesis statement.

Planning your Time

Second, consider how to use the time as your ally. Rather than allowing it to control you, think of how you can use the time to keep yourself on track. For example, if the essay is only a small part of the total grade, control the amount of time you give yourself to write the answer. You might do this by answering that question first under a stricter time limit before you answer any of the multiple choice questions. Divide your the time you have to work with so you can work smarter.

As an example, you may have 30 minutes to complete an essay. In order to work quickly, you could follow a time schedule like this:

Time (Counting down)	Task
30:00-27:00	Write your thesis and topic sentences (outline)
27:00-20:00	Write your first body paragraph
20:00-13:00	Write your second body paragraph
13:00-8:00	Write your introduction paragraph
8:00-3:00	Write your conclusion paragraph

3:00-0:00	Revise and edit your essay
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You might wonder why this example starts with the body paragraphs instead of the introduction and conclusion. This is one suggestion of how to ensure you use the majority of your time to fully support your ideas and create a good organization for the main part of the essay. The introduction and conclusion are often easier to write after you have the middle. If you run out of time, you would still have at least your thesis statement and restatement as the minimum expectation for the beginning and end of your essay.

There are other approaches to choosing which paragraph to start with:

- Start with the point that is easiest to write, leaving the sections that are hardest for when you have some momentum to your writing. (Note: This may create a challenge if you are still stuck and have no time to revise)
- Start from the beginning and work to the end. (Note: Although this seems like the obvious way to approach writing, it can often lead to disorganized thoughts)

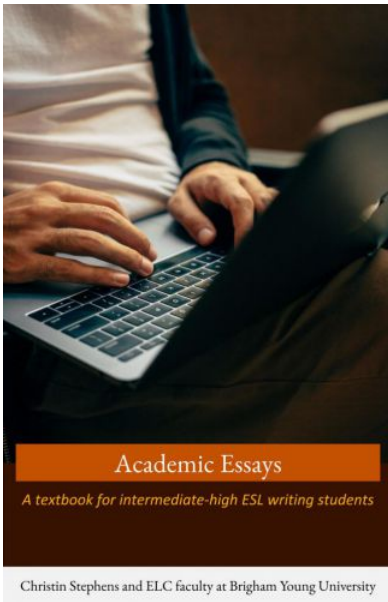
You will obviously need to structure your times differently depending on the length of time you have to work with. It may also be necessary to adjust times depending on what is most important to the teacher. For example, there may be a larger emphasis on accuracy, so you will need to give yourself more time to revise and edit.

Exercises

Exercise 1: Timed Writing Practice

You have 30 minutes to respond to this prompt. Your answer should be around 300 words long. Before you begin, think about how you will use your timer to complete the task

Prompt: Do you think all colleges should require students to study abroad as part of their graduation requirements? Why or why not?



Stephens, C. (n.d.). *Academic B Writing*. BYU Open Textbook Network.
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